



## THE EPISCOPAL ARCHIVE OF VIC



THE BISHOPRIC OF VIC HAS MANAGED TO PRESERVE AN EXTRAORDINARY ARCHIVE WHICH CONTAINS A WEALTH OF DOCUMENTS DATING FROM THE NINTH CENTURY DOWN TO THE PRESENT DAY.

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**T**he bishopric of Vic has managed to preserve an extraordinary archive which contains a wealth of documents dating from the ninth century down to the present day. Just about every kind of document imaginable is present: sacramental registers, decrees ordering pastoral visits, chapter reports, royal or apostolic privileges, administrative and judicial texts, financial reports, etc.; an inexhaustible source of information regarding all aspects of the ecclesiastical and civil history of our people. The archive is kept in the rooms built by Bishop Veyan i Mola, in 1804, over the cathedral's old gothic cloister, and, along with the episcopal library's books, the material occupies almost two kilometres of shelving. However brief the visit, people are invariably impressed by this mass of documentation and by its excellent state of conservation, which is the result of the cold, dry climate of the Plain of Vic.

The present arrangement of the archive is one of the most important jobs undertaken by Dr. Eduard Junyent i Subirà, who, in 1952, managed to bring together under one roof and one administration various ecclesiastical and civil archives which had previously been stored in different places.

The earliest documents in the archive belong to the *Arxiu Capitular*, which contains almost all the documents regarding the possessions and estates of the cathedral of Sant Pere de Vic and its canons from 879, when Count Guifré el Pelós reorganized civil and ecclesiastical life in the districts of Ripollès, Osona and Bages, down to the abolition of mortmain in 1835. Amongst the archive's most re-

markable treasures are the 650 original parchments from the ninth and tenth centuries and five papal bulls on papyrus, from the second half of the tenth century. They are still kept in their original cabinet with its 48 drawers on three levels, in a room built in 1804 next to the east gallery of the gothic cloister.

The administrative records of the non-canonical clergy's possessions form the so-called *Arxiu del Capbreu*, rich in thirteenth to seventeenth century parchments, leases, and records of masses held. However, the most important documents it contains are the records of burials in the old episcopal cemetery, which took place between 1348 and the mid-nineteenth century, when the new civil cemetery was started.

In two rooms leading off the *Arxiu Capitular*, is a collection of old episcopal notarial deeds, known as the *Cúria Fumada*, an allusion to the occasion when it was damaged by a fire which, luckily, affected no more than the covers of a few books. It contains the drafts of the notarial documents drawn up in Vic between the years 1230 and 1800: some 6,000 volumes and an inexhaustible source for researchers. Until 1936, it was kept in its original location, under the shadow of the cathedral's old steeple. Luckily, the fire that affected the cathedral that same year left it undamaged, but the *Generalitat's* archive rescue service nevertheless moved it to its present location, which was considered to be much safer.

The *Cúria Fumada* also contains an impressive collection of some 2,500 volumes from the Vic royal actuary, which go from the seventeenth century down to the

year 1900, and the protocols of various towns of the plain of Vic and the viscounty of Cabreres. All these documents are kept in a room next to the archive, over the south gallery of the gothic cloister.

The documentation of the church possessions which provided an income for the bishops of Vic and that relating to the ecclesiastical and civil jurisdiction they exercised is kept in the archive known as the *Mensa Episcopal*, situated in the same room as the protocols from the *Notaria Reial*. Until 1952, the archive was kept on the first floor of the Bishop's Palace, near the curia, where, in 1936, it was partially destroyed by fire. The documents it contains go back to the year 911, but its origin must be placed at the end of the twelfth century, when the bishop and canons shared the properties which, until then, had supported the activities and the community of the cathedral. Recently, the archive has been enlarged with the addition of the historical documents from some 120 parishes, covering the period up to 1900.

Finally, there are two other rooms housing the *Arxiu de la vegueria de Vic*, which goes back to about 1300 and contains the documents relating to royal jurisdiction in the area of Osona. It consists of about a hundred volumes containing the records of the curia and over a thousand volumes covering civil and criminal prosecutions.

All these documents are appropriately arranged and are available for consultation by researchers. A year ago, a new reading room was opened, and work has just started on the restoration of the roof, with materials that will eliminate all possibility of fire.